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The Hotelier's Guide to Choosing a Digital F&B Ordering Platform

Our guide to selecting the most effective online F&B ordering platform for your hotel or restaurant

Summary/Contents

Choosing the right digital dining solution is a critical decision to make, but what should you consider when reviewing the market to ensure you make the best decision for your hotel or restaurant?

In this guide, find out more about:

- An overview of online F&B ordering platforms

- How to assess what you require from a system, the results you want to achieve and the challenges you need it to resolve

- The most crucial things to consider in your search

- How digital dining helps your staff, your business and your guests

Technology is advancing at a rapid rate, make sure you're using the most optimum solution to meet your guest's needs, save resources and maximise revenue generation.

## Get ready to future-proof your business ⭐

Read on to find out more...

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What is an online F&B ordering platform?

- A digital F&B ordering platform empowers guests to browse menus, order items and pay online (as well as choose from delivery, pick-up or room service) from the comfort of their own device.

- It can be activated for a range of outlets - from in-room dining, lobby areas and pool decks, to dark kitchens and tableside ordering in restaurants.

- Fully integrated with both POS and PMS, hoteliers can save resources and improve service times - orders are processed directly in the kitchen and guests pay online.

- Hotels save significant costs by keeping their digital menus updated at the press of a button and providing access via a static QR code.

- F&B digital ordering enables hoteliers to reach and engage with their guests in a way that suits them, whilst at the same time driving ancillary revenue and saving resources.

Browse, tap, order and pay. It really is that simple!

Your needs and requirements
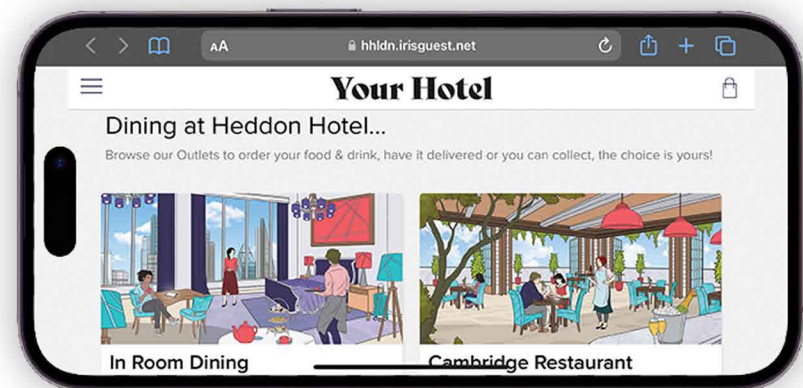
To ensure your decision aligns with the needs of your hotel or restaurant, you need to ascertain what your requirements are. For example:

What do you require from your online ordering platform system?

✓ How many outlets is it for and what kind e.g. in-room dining, pool area, lobby, dark kitchen, spa and/or cinema?

✓ Is it for multiple properties or brands?

✓ Do you require an online payment facility?

✓ Do you need it to integrate with other systems?

What goals do you need to achieve?

✓ Is your main aim to increase ancillary revenue?

✓ Do you want to improve the guest experience?

✓ Do you want to save resources and be more sustainable?

✓ Do you need to streamline operations and implement efficiencies?

What challenges do you need it to resolve?

✓ Are you suffering from staff shortages - do you have too much demand with too few resources?

✓ Are you turning away covers, or limiting hours?

✓ Is your kitchen getting overwhelmed at peak times?

✓ Do you need to reduce costs?

✓ Do you need to generate more of a return on your technology investment?

Or is it all of the above? Once you've highlighted your specific requirements and pain points, you can start your research!

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Things to consider in your serach

Here, we highlight the most crucial things to consider during your buying journey and research phase. With many solutions on the market, it's wise to ascertain which one is right for your property and which solution ticks most of the boxes.

Have a read through...

1. The User Experience

In essence, the platform needs to be user-friendly and easy to navigate for both guests and staff (regardless of technical ability). Guests crave convenience and speed so your app should be both intuitive and simple to use.

A platform which can offer guests seamless online ordering, personalised options, convenient delivery or pickup services, the ability to track their order and review delivery times, will greatly improve the guest experience thereby boosting guest satisfaction and loyalty.

Likewise, it needs to be easy for staff to manage in the backend so they can use it for their own means (digital staff ordering for example), review orders and make edits.
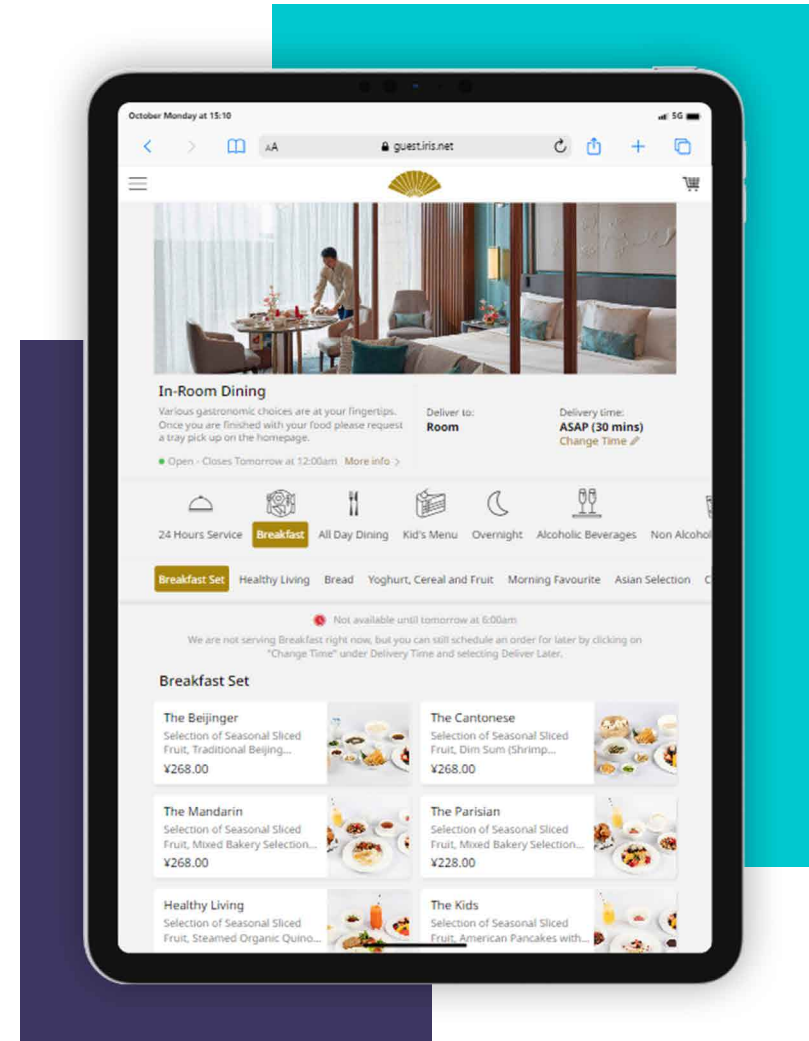
2. Upsell opportunities

Does the platform enable you to add recommended and related items? Perhaps you could pair your mains with a complementary glass of wine or suggest some side dishes? All these add-ons will enhance the guest experience and drive guest spend.

3. Integrations

Do you need true, real-time integrations to your POS, PMS and SOS? Does the platform integration deliver database integrity, synchronise your menus and streamline operations, so that orders and payments are sent directly to your point of sale and managed in one place?
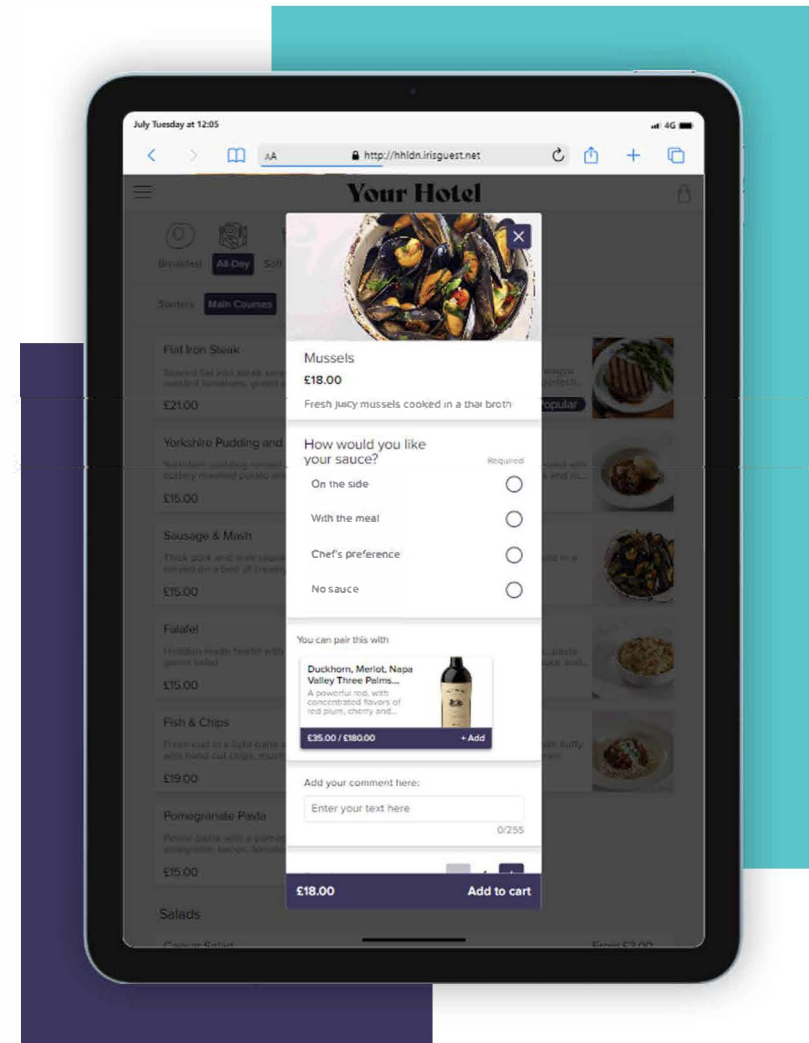
4. Online payments

Can guests make quick and easy payments on the app? Can it handle safe and secure online payments for both guests and non-residents through a payment gateway? This is quickly becoming the 'norm' so will likely be a guest expectation.

5. Editable

Check that you have the flexibility to easily customise and edit the content on your digital menus to ensure its up-to-date and brand compliant. It needs to be quick and simple to amend new pictures, prices, ingredients, special events, and promotions. It's imperative you keep your menus relevant, accurate and safe (especially with regards to allergens).
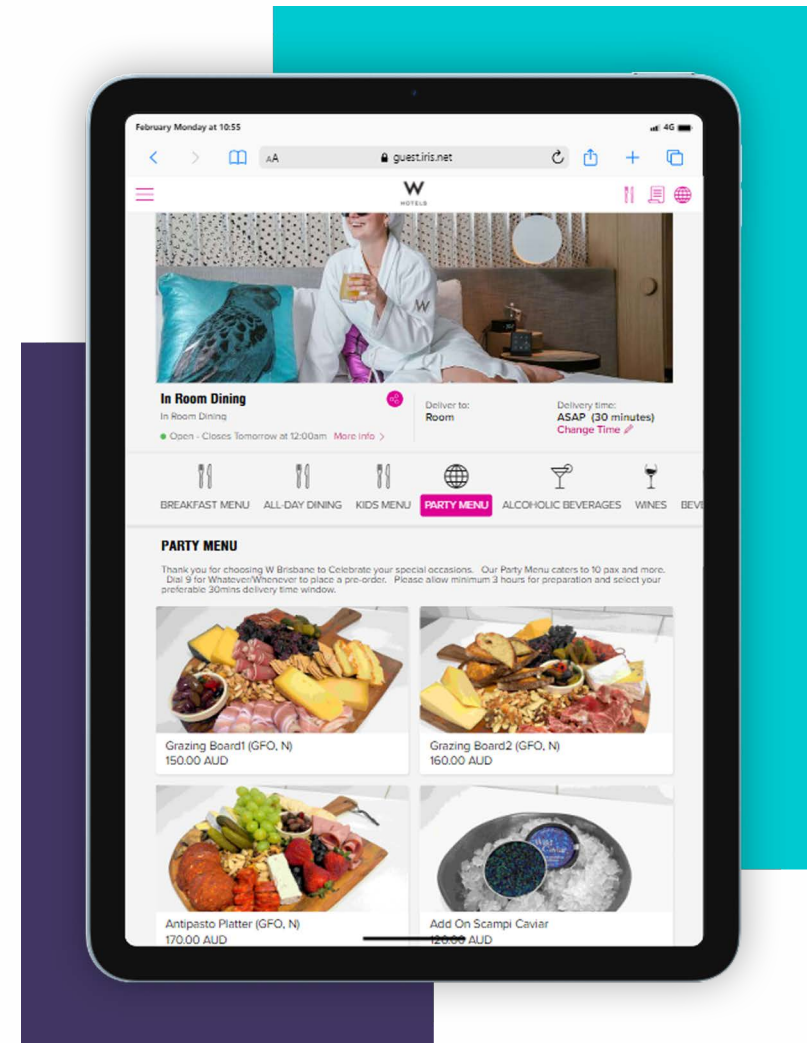
6. Latest features

Check that the platform has all the latest features to enable you to maximise its performance.

For example:

- **Search and filter tool for allergens -** enables guests to personalise menu choices to cater for allergens, intolerances, and preferences.

- **Flexible time slots for outlets -** set maximum orders per time slot to regulate the pace of orders.

- **Staff ordering -** waitstaff can use the online ordering platform to take orders from customers.

- **Open tab -** guests can start a tab, order multiple rounds of food and drink, and then pay in a single transaction at the end.

- **Split bill -** allows multiple users to pay a single tab.

- **Advance ordering –** enables guests to pre-order items ahead of their stay.
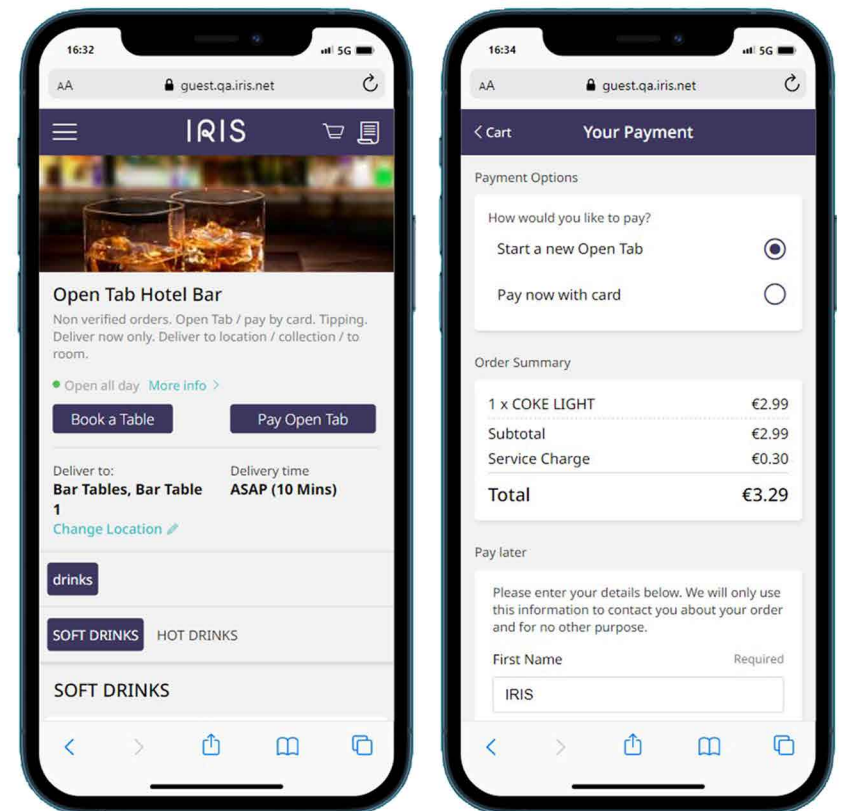
7. Data and reporting

You need to be able to review the performance of your F&B outlets. Information on revenue (high performing menu items and outlets), order numbers, costs, and average guest spend should be readily available so you have all the data on hand to make informed decisions with regards to menus and staff resources, and forecast demand.

8. Scalability

How easy is it to add additional outlets or properties to your platform? If you're growing your portfolio, you'll need to select a platform that you can add new properties to, that can adapt and grow with you as new features and capabilities emerge.

9. Support and Implementation

Make sure your preferred vendor works closely with you so you're up and running with a thorough set up and configuration from day one. Ensure your staff receive training and find the platform easy to manage.

It's also imperative that the vendor provides ongoing, knowledgeable support (perhaps via an online support portal that has a range of tutorials, FAQs and videos available 24/7) and is on hand if you require assistance on phone, live chat or email.
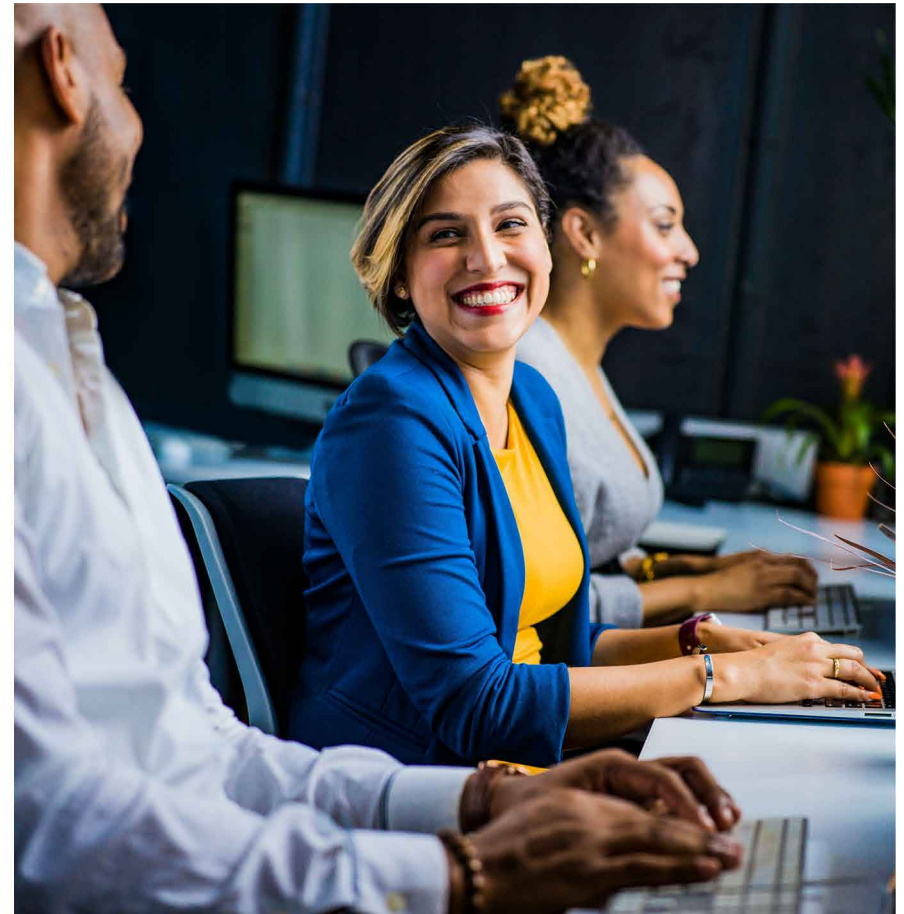
10. Group Capabilities

Do you need a solution that works across multiple properties or brands? In an ideal world, you'll want to manage and control everything from one place, on one platform, with access to all your integrations.

Parent companies can send down brand-led guidelines, content and links which can be distributed through the platform to all hotel outlets.

Enjoy the economies of scale and save resources by doing everything at brand level just once.
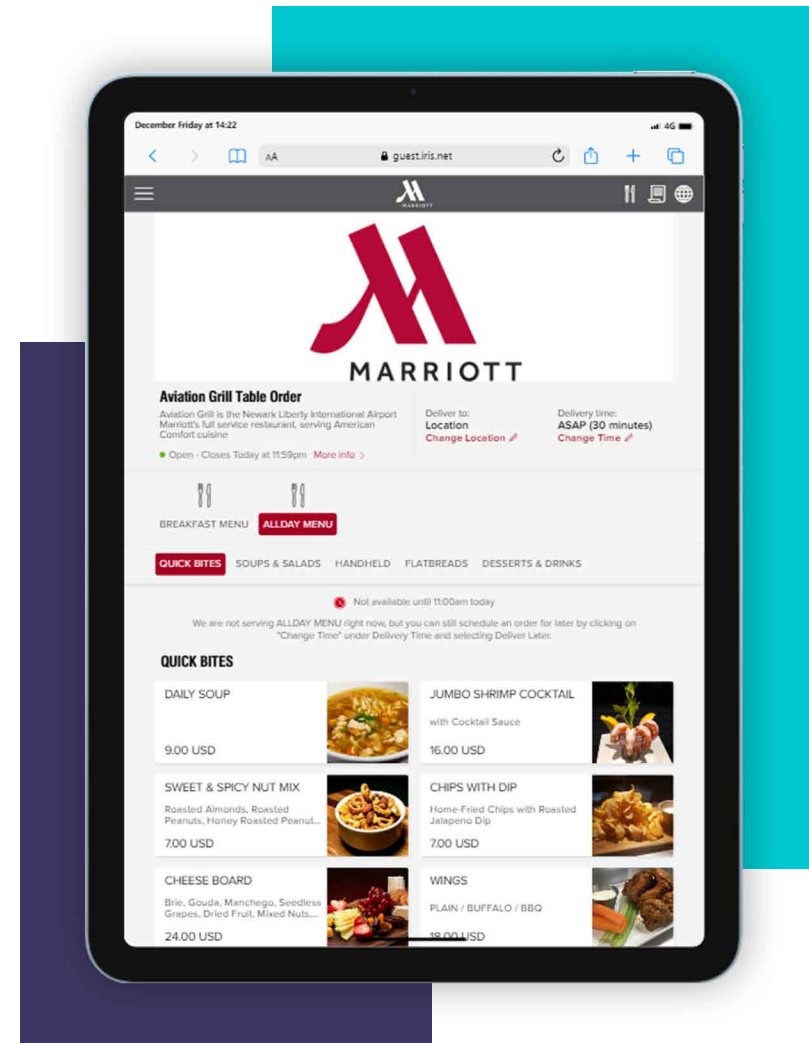
11. Multi-lingual

Does your hotel host overseas guests? See if the platform has a language switching tool so you can display your menu in your guest's native language.

Guests are likely to order more and have an enhanced experience if they can understand the menu in their local language. It's a helpful reference tool for staff too if they need to confirm something in a different language.
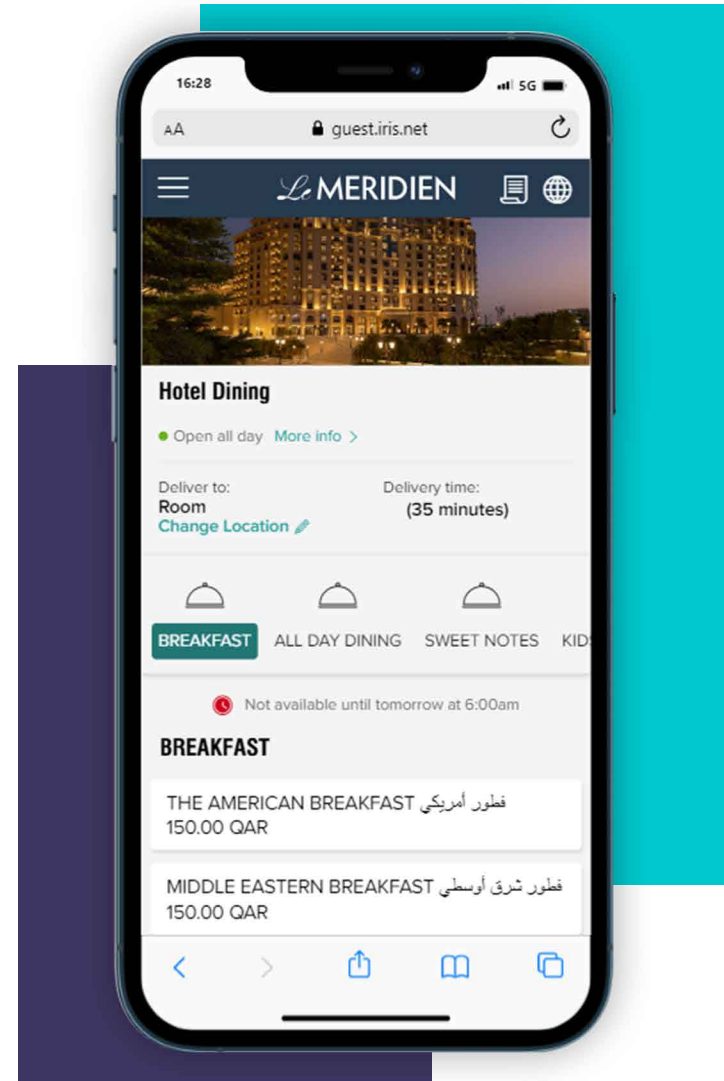
12. Cost-effectiveness

Platforms can significantly affect operational costs and revenue. Hotels need to choose a platform that fits their budget while delivering on the desired outcomes.

Check the return you expect to achieve on your investment, the savings you should realise (no costly re-prints or design fees) and the additional revenue you're likely to generate.

Check if any commissions are charged or if it's on a monthly SaaS model so you have complete visibility of all costs and can budget accordingly.

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13. Safe and Secure

Does the platform offer a secure digital environment with regulated staff access and safe hosting?

Does it offer a robust, secure means of managing payments and protecting personally identifiable information (PII)?

It's imperative to review all the aspects in the ordering and paying process and employ a solution that protects guest data and safeguards the hotel against potential breaches or unauthorised access.

14. Accessibility

With QR code ordering, no downloads are required. Guests can scan the code, access menus and place orders via their smartphone's web browser.

Operators can generate QR codes so that guests can get instant access to your menus any time, any where.

You can also provide unique QR codes to determine the exact location of the guest thus improving delivery effectiveness.

How hotels and guests benefit

Online F&B ordering benefits your staff, your business and your guests - embracing technology will help you stay competitive in the hospitality industry and enable operators to realise their operational and revenue potential.

Here are just a few of the advantages...

How hotels and guests benefit

👍 Empower Guests

Ordering and paying for food and drinks is now easier than ever for guests and less time consuming for staff. It can be done when they like, where they like, from the comfort of their own device.

Grow Revenue

Your guests are in full control and can freely order without flagging down a waiter, meaning you can boost order volumes and increase guest spend by 20%-40% on average. You can maximise revenue further by tempting guests with upsells and complementary items.

Broaden reach

Whether you're serving staying guests or casual diners, you can offer an interactive, contactless experience. Menu browsing, pick-up, room service or deliver to table – 100% of guests can be reached.

Enhance the guest experience

Improved order accuracy, reduced customer wait times and mobile access all elevate the guest experience and lead to enhanced loyalty and spend.

Boost efficiency

By passing on transactional processes to guests, you can save resources and serve more covers. With automated, seamless integrations, orders can be processed and delivered quicker. Staff time is saved and resources can be reallocated where necessary.

Gain insights

Analyse useful data to review how your digital F&B platform is performing, know when your kitchen is at its busiest and what your most popular dishes are.

Make life easier for you and your guests

Choosing the right F&B ordering platform for your specific needs will lead to improved operational efficiencies, enhanced guest satisfaction, and a boost in revenue.

With digital dining, your staff will love the automated processes and your guests will appreciate the improved service, enabling you to stand out in a crowded market.

Read how other leading hotels of the world have adopted successful digital F&B strategies by implementing IRIS's online F&B ordering app **here.**

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Hotels of all sizes are providing digital solutions to their guests.

Get started by requesting a demo or let us know about your business.

www.iris.net/demo